

The Three Pillars of Awakening

By

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Abstract: Ken Wilber expounds on five major traditions focus on ridding oneself of illusion, which prevents one from awakening. This paper summarizes these five traditions approach to awakening, and then suggests how each one is true but partial, in that they each seem to favor one of the three sets of quadratic poles, the interior/exterior, the individual/collective and the insides and outsides, and how practices supported by all three polar pairs may open the way for a triadic awakening suggested by the quadrant map.

Great Spiritual traditions all seem to have a recognition of the non-dual, and each seems to have a particular emphasis on what they see as non-dual.

In an audio “Esoteric Christianity, the Five Non-dual Traditions, Part three”, Ken Wilber describes the particular quality of how each of five traditions engage with what he calls Maya, or a sense of illusion, which keeps us from realizing “that there is only “God” or spirit. This seems to be a general consensus amongst the great traditions. Each tradition has their own view as to why we don’t realize God, and proposes practices of what we need to do to step out of the illusions we are in and free ourselves of them for our Awakening to God.

Wilber shares that the Hindu Vedanta tradition advances the notion that the realization that “all is God”, requires undifferentiated Oneness. Maya, or illusion occurs when we experience differentiation between the self and anything else, so the path to freeing ourselves of this differentiation is bringing subject and object together as one using a Samadhi (concentration) practice. When we bring subject

and object together, we can see the original being-consciousness-bliss, or Brahman, the realization experience of God.

The Buddhist Mahasamghika tradition focuses on another sense of what causes this illusion. To them, realization is Sunyata, or the “unqualifiable”. To them ultimate reality has no qualities at all, and what prevents us from realizing God, is our conceptualization, or putting qualities to any object. The activity that removes this illusion and brings us to realization is awareness without condemnation, judgment, assumptions or any other qualities of any kind. The unqualifiable, or pure awareness brings the openness to complete freedom.

The third tradition, Yogacara, or “mind only” school of Buddhism maintains that freedom and realization is consciousness without an object. Objects can arise as long as there isn’t a subject-object split. In other words any object can arise but it is one’s relationship to the object that prevents realization of “God”. If the object is not split from the subject there a non-dual relationship and realization occurs. In this and other tantric traditions, one can participate with any kind of object, such as food, sex, money, as long as they are not split off from the self.

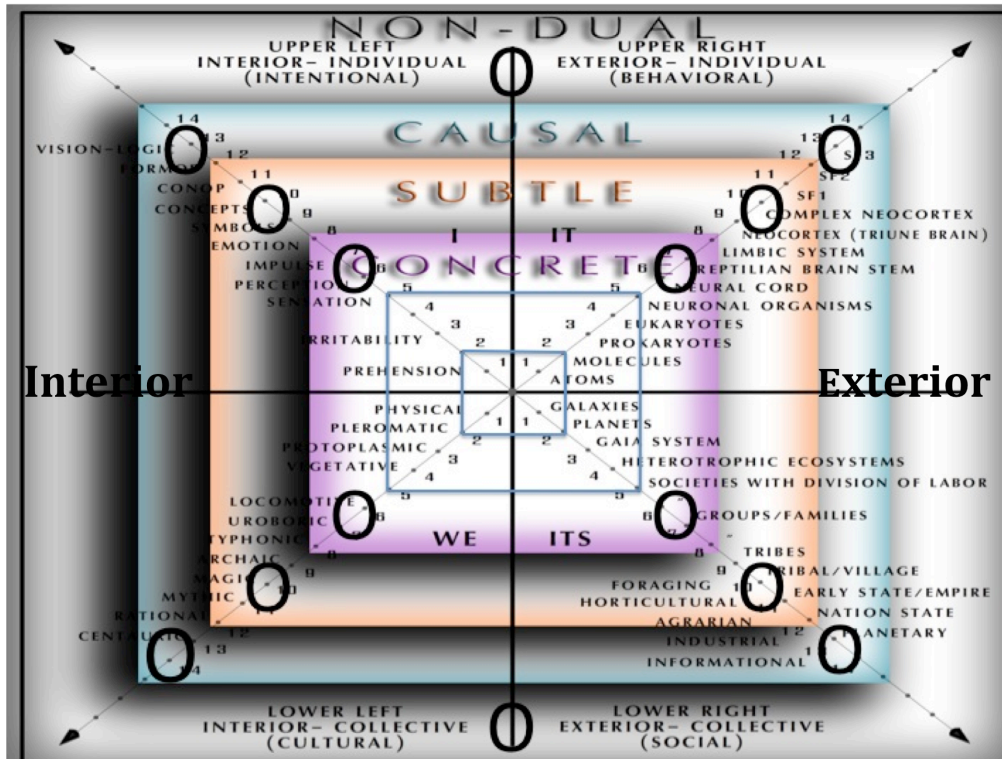
The Dzogchen tradition expresses that realization is the “Great Perfection”, and what stops one from realizing this is seeking. Seeking implies that God isn’t present here and now, moving one out of the timeless present to the future where God “isn’t. The way out of Maya is to stop seeking. It is seeking that prevents one from realizing that all is here right now and one can’t find this awakening or truth when one is focused on something in the future through seeking. To realize the

Great perfection one must engage in non-action, or effortless awareness, and to take actions that aren't motivated, or "non actions".

In the Christian tradition the realization of God is lost when one realizes a separate self in the Garden of Eden. It is this separateness that hides this realization, and the path to regaining this realization is through love, which, when taken far enough brings self and other, self and God into a unification expressed in the symbol of the Eucharist: "eat my body and drink my blood" a concrete remembrance of the physical non separation between God and human, and human and human.

While Wilber recognizes that these non-dual traditions all work with specific ways to move past the blockages of Maya or our illusions, towards realizing that all is "God", he himself has brought together all non-dual traditions together by recognizing and identifying the three primordial poles that set up the separations that we must move beyond if we are to awaken. Those poles are, the *Interior and Exterior, the Individual and the Collective and Insides and Outsides*. Each of the above traditions seems to favor or foreground one of these primordial poles, but not all three of them.

Individual



Collective

For example, the Vedanta tradition is concerned with undifferentiated Oneness or a non-duality between subject and any object, or in other words, non-differentiation between self and object. One's sense of subject relates to one's own identity, which is more of an interior recognition. The objects that one is separate from when duality appears, are exterior to this self. Thus this tradition seems to focus on bringing a non-duality to the interior and exterior poles of Wilber's frame,

The Mahasamghika tradition focuses on the realization of Sunyata, or the “unqualifiable”. To them ultimate reality has no qualities at all, and what prevents us from realizing that is our conceptualization, or putting qualities to any object. This seems to be another approach to recognizing the separation between subject and object—that is, rather than differentiation between them as expressed in the Vedanta tradition, the focus in the Mahasamghika tradition is on the internal conceptualization being thrust outwards on objects causing a separation between them. This tradition seems also to work with the non-duality of the interior and exterior poles.

The third tradition that Wilber describes is the Yogacara tradition, which supports consciousness without an object. This tradition seems to advance from the two previous traditions, where the identity or self is seen more as consciousness where objects can arise within the self sense as long as they aren’t split off; more so one must be non-dual in their relationship with the objects. These Tantric traditions, support bringing anything into the body, mind, spirit from the exterior, such as food, sex, money, as long as one isn’t averse or attached...it is the attachment that causes one to separate them from the self, and thus one can’t make the rest of the outside world non-dual with one’s own interiors. This tradition also seems to relate to the interior and exterior poles of Wilber’s frame.

These three traditions seem to focus primary focus on the projection outward from the subject to the object, whether differentiation from, conceptualization of, or relationship (attachment, aversion) of the subject with an object. Each subsequent iteration of these traditions seems to further clarify how

these Interior and Exterior poles become non-dual and how to bring realization of “God” by bringing them into non-duality.

In the StAGES model these two poles of the *interior and exterior* are brought together whenever one enters a new tier. First the concrete interior and exterior, moving from the concrete tier to the subtle tier; then the subtle interior and exterior, moving from the subtle to the causal tier, and lastly the causal interior and exterior when moving to the non-dual tier. These poles seem to point to practices involving projections of the mind outward on objects and introjections of the objects into one’s self (such as assumptions). Given the Wilber’s descriptions above, though, these three Eastern traditions do not seem to have a clear focus on bringing together non-dually of the Individual and Collective poles, nor the Inside and the Outside poles.

However the Dzogchen tradition, in contrast, seems to focus on a different set of poles by recognizing the nature of seeking to time, related to non-duality. When you seek, you separate space and time—for seeking looks to the future, which is none other than now, and when you make that separation you can’t bring that non-duality into experience. This tradition seems to bring together the polar pair of Insides and the Outsides, which are the primordial difference between involution and evolution, otherwise experienced as space and time.

The StAGES model specifically identifies the coming together of the insides and outsides in the transitions from an early person perspective where the individual is “had by” or in an involutory, or space like receptive stage, and moving to the later part of that perspective where the person “has” the perspective

and enters into a time trajectory. This happens both in the individual stages and the collective stages and appears as a “rocking chair” between involution and evolution, space and time, from the concrete tier, to the subtle tier, through the causal tier until they come together, non-dually in the Non-Dual tier.

However, while Dzogchen seems to focus on the inside and outside poles, bringing the other two polar pairs, the *interior and exterior*, and the *individual and collective*, into non-duality seems to be missing as a primary focus.

The Christian tradition seems to recognize yet another approach to duality; the separation between God and human, and human and human. This tradition seems to focus on *Individual and the Collective* non-duality by having as its primary practice of “Love your neighbor as yourself” and “Love God with your whole heart, mind, self” along with the Eucharistic practice of “This is my body; this is my blood—Do this in remembrance of me”. These practices bring the Individual and collective poles together into a non-dual embrace. The StAGES model follows this non-dual path of the bringing together the individual and the collective. This occurs in all of the tiers when the identity of the person shifts from the individual self stages to the collective stages in each tier; from the concrete self to the concrete collective (first to second person perspective) from the subtle self to the subtle collective (from the third to the fourth person perspective) from the causal self to the causal collective (from the fifth to the sixth person perspective) and from the non-dual self to the non-dual collective (from the seventh to the eighth person perspective).

It seems that each non-dual tradition has a primary focus on a particular set of these three primordial polar pairs, bringing them into non-duality but none of them seems to clearly recognize the possibilities of Awakening and realization that might be derived from practices that bring all three primordial poles, the *interior and Exterior, the Insides and Outsides, and the Individual and Collective*, into a triadic non-duality for a full awakening.

However, somehow manifestation seems to gradually bring these three polar poles together in a gradual awakening, without our conscious consent anyway, even when we aren't involved with spiritual traditions. We seem to simply awaken into an experience of ordinariness as these three polar pairs continually and gradually come together, building another, subtler set of triadic poles, and this pattern seems to continue to iterate through the four tiers.

For example in the concrete tier a very ordinary experience of the *individual and collective* non-duality comes up in the experience of intercourse, creating a new One through conception, activating a concrete non-duality of the individual and the collective. Ordinary eating brings together non-dually the *exteriors and interiors* into non-duality—no separation of the food and the body. When a baby is born, there is no separation between *space (insides) in time (outsides)* that they can detect, for they don't have the awareness of seeking outside of the moment.

The birth of the Mind seems to bring binariness to these non-dualities as one begins to recognize the separateness of the self from everything else and other (individual and collective distinctions and interior and exterior distinctions which brings separation) and the recognition that something may occur later; the

recognition of moving toward something (future) or away from something (past), which brings about a separation of space and time, activating the inside and outside poles.

The three polar pairs seem to arise together, only to have the Mind continue to separate them still further with more complexity and larger space and time, until they begin to come together in the gaze of one's own consciousness in the causal tier, culminating in a final triadic non-duality in the non-dual tier by bringing together all three polar pairs—1. the causal interiors and exteriors, (emptiness and fullness) come together in Oneness. 2. the Non-dual Individual, (the Witness of this nondual emptiness and fullness) and the non-dual Collective, which dissolves the difference between the Witness and everything else, and 3. the final bringing together these two non-dual poles with the third set of poles, the insides and outsides, (space and time) and a realization that consensual reality separating space and time is an illusion, and returns consciously to the recognition that involution and evolution (space(lessness) and time(lessness)) are one and the same, and this obliterates any sense of difference between space and time. When all three poles come together non-dually, a robust Triadic awakening may occur.

We are constantly realizing Awakening of these three poles even when they aren't called to attention by our spiritual traditions. Thus each tradition that has their primary focuses on one primordial set of poles, while beautiful, does not have the three legged stool of balance so needed by working with all three sets of poles. Thus, our spiritual practices could be greatly enhanced by developing practices that engage all three of these non-dual practices at appropriate times in the concrete

stages, the subtle stages, and the causal stages, moving through the non-dual tier spaces.

This is an invitation to develop a series of practices that speak to these processes of non-duality through from the concrete tier stages through the non-dual stages.